

XXVII. *Part of a Letter from Francis Nevill, Esq; to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Clogher, containing a Relation of several Urns and Sepulchral Monuments lately found in Ireland.*

Belturbet, Decemb. 9. 1712.

My Lord,

WHEN Bishop *Hopkins* was Bishop of *Raphoe*, there was a Whale cast on the Island *Dowey*, which belongs to the Bishoprick; which Island is about Ten Miles beyond *Castle-doe*. This Whale carried me into those wild Parts of the County of *Donnegal*; and whilst I was in that Island, and in another adjacent call'd *Innis Bofin*, which did likewise belong to the Bishoprick, I saw several Whales playing for several Days together in that Sea. The Whale that was cast ashore was but a small one, 50 Foot long: It was of that kind that hath the Whalebone in the Roof of the Mouth.

When I came back to *Castle-doe*, I was told of an Urn that was found within a Mile of that Place; where I went, and met with the Man that had found the same. He carried me into a little Island, surrounded with Bog, where his Cabin stood: The Island was very dry, light, sandy Ground, which he had plowed: The Plow running in some Places over flat Stones cover'd above with Earth, made the Man curious to search; and the rather because he was a Clothier by Trade, he wanting
a flat

a flat Stone to make him a Hot-press (for so they do, who want an Iron Plate to Press their Cloth on.) In taking up the Stone he found a Cavity under it, which I believe may be call'd a Sepulcher, or Tomb: In it he found an Urn, which he broke, because nothing was in it but Bones and Ashes. In the same Tomb there were some Bones of one about ten or twelve Years old. The Tomb stood E. and W: the Urn was found in the West end; it was the smallest Urn I have seen, but the Cavity wherein it lay was near 5 foot long, two foot and a half broad, and about the same depth: It was made up of six coarse flag Stones, viz. one on each side, one at the Head, another at the Foot, one above and one below: The Bones were much wasted, and but few of them. Whilst I staid there, we opened three more, which the Man quickly found out, because he had made his marks by the Plow. These three were much larger than the former; one of the three was near the Center of the Island, and biggest of all; but all alike made. There was no Urn in either of them, and but Bones in one, which was the biggest. The Bones seem'd to be of a Man of an ordinary Stature: If there had been any in the other two they were consumed. The Man told me he did believe there were more; but I had not time to make a further search. This seem'd to be a common Burying Place, there being so many of that kind of Tombs in it; and one may gather from thence, that at that time they burnt some, and others they did not; because here was an Urn found with Bones burnt, and there were Bones unburnt. This Island is situate on an *Isthmus* about half a Mile over, between the Bay of *Dunfannaghan* and the Lough of *Kinnevier*, near to Lieut. General *Hamilton's* House.

There were three the like Urns found in three small Stone Chests, under a great Kern, or heap of Stones, near to *Ban* Bridge in the County of *Dowry*; which heap

heap being removed to help to build that Bridge, they were discover'd.

There were the like Urns found near *Omagh* in the County of *Tyrone*, in the like Chests, under two heaps of Stones, which were removed to build some Houses in the said Town.

There was one Urn found in a little sandy Hill near *Cookston* on the Road to *Liffon* in the County of *Tyrone*: It was covered with a great rude Lime-Stone; which being removed in order to make Lime, the Urn was discovered in a Hole encompass'd with six Stones of equal bigness, which made a Hexagon, in which the Urn stood. The Water that had fallen on the Urn from the Lime-Stone, or the Air condensing, had petrify'd, and made a Stony crust on the outside thereof. There were some Bones and Ashes found in it. Sir *Robert Staples* had the Urn and gave it to me, which I designed for the College; but the Fellow I intrusted to carry it broke the same, and so my design fail'd.

At *Dungannon* in the same County, a Servant of mine working in a Sand-Pit near the Town, struck on an Urn, which was the largest I ever saw. It was found with the Mouth whelm'd downward, the Bones and Ashes on a flat Stone, and the Urn covering them: It would have held about three Quarts, and had been better burnt in the Fire than they usually are: But this met with the fate of others; it was broke by the Spade before the Man was aware, and had no Stones about it as the others, but was bury'd in the Earth about a Foot under Ground. As they dug the Bank for Sand, the Place where the Carcass was burnt was discovered by the Coals and pieces of Bones, which spread a great way, about a foot under Ground.

Near to the same Town, on Mr. *Knox's* Estate, in a Town-land call'd *Killimeille* (which in *English* is Lowsey Cell, or Lowsey Burying-Place) there are on the top

top of the Hill two Circles of dry Stone about 20 Yards in Diameter each; they meet on two sides and make the Figure of Eight. I suppose when first form'd they made a dry Wall for two distinct Burying-Places, one for the Men, the other for the Women; or rather two Repositories for Urns. One *James Hamilton*, who farm'd the Ground from Mr. *Knox*, wanting Stones to build a House, drew off most of them from this Place. When he had enter'd within one of the Circles, he found three Urns in three several Holes, set about with six Stones, and cover'd with flat Stones, and other Stones thrown on the Top; he broke what he found, not finding what he expected. Mr. *Knox* and I went there to see the Place, and saw the Holes and broken Urns; but the Man's House being finish'd, there were no more found; but I am perswaded there are many more, because these three were found near together. The Poor Man met with an Accident of Fire in his Mault-House, which did him great Damage; the *Irish* attributed it to his taking those Stones to build his House, which they call'd Holy, tho' they knew nothing of its being a Burying-Place till thus discover'd.

On the same Hill about thirty Yards distance to the Eastward of these Circles, upon search we found the Altar whereon they used to burn their Dead, over-grown with Earth and green Sod, which we caused to be uncovered: It was made of dry Stone, eight Foot long and four Foot broad, the Coals and Bones fresh among the Stones, and the Stones burnt with Fire. At the East end of this Altar there was a Pit, which was likewise over-grown with Earth and green Sod; which we open'd, and found it to be the Receiver, where they swept in all that remain'd on the Altar after Burning. We search'd deep, and the substance was all alike, black and greasy: It had tinged the Hill in a
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Strait Line from the Pit to the bottom of the Hill ; and discover'd it self to our View, the Land being then plough'd.

I shall add only one more that I have seen, besides the many that are yearly discover'd ; to shew that this was the Way the *Irish* had for Burying in Heathen time, though the People know nothing of it by History or Tradition.

In the County of *Farmanagh*, upon a Hill over *Wattle-Bridge*, there has been a mighty Heap of Stones, the Basis incircled with very large Stones standing on end. This Heap has been removed to pave our Ways, and build that Bridge ; under which there were some Urns found in Stone Coffins, and I believe there are some remaining. These were, I suppose, the Urns of some great Personages. The Heap was so big, and the Stones about it so large and so many, that it cost great Pains to bring them there : Or perhaps there might have been a Fight there, and some of the great Officers might have their Bones interr'd there, and the Army made that great Work over them ; for it seem'd to be a Work done by many. I have seen several such Heaps in this Kingdom, and I doubt not but they are all Monuments for the Dead. I am, &c.

FRAN. NEVILL.